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**Multi-stakeholder dialogue segment**

# Multi-stakeholder dialogue segment

## Note by the Secretary-General

**Addendum****

## Dialogue paper by farmers' organizations***

## Implementing sustainable development: proposals by farmers

### Increasing resources for rural development and sustainable agriculture

1. Agriculture is directly linked to implementing many principles of Agenda 21, including poverty eradication, sustainable consumption and production, management of natural resources, energy, freshwater, health, education, trade and market access, as well as technology transfer and capacity-building. It is therefore essential to stop the drain of resources away from agriculture, whether it be from national budgets or from international development funds. Sustainable agriculture, rural development and agricultural research should be given the priority that they so badly need to achieve the United Nations targets to reduce by half the number of people living in poverty.

### Strengthening participatory decision-making processes

2. Implementation would be strengthened if all levels of government created the necessary framework for multi-stakeholder participation processes. Sustainable development policies would be more efficient and successful if all stakeholders were involved and committed through a bottom-up decision-making approach. A proper policy development can only be achieved if the people who make practical decisions are involved in decisions about how to use

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resources in a wise and sustainable way. It is important to package sustainable development not as a demand or imposition of society on farmers, for which farmers would bear the cost, but as a necessity and methodology to also sustain the welfare and incomes of farmers.

3. For that purpose, effective partnerships among stakeholders must be built. However, effective partnerships are partnerships among equals, and today farmers are unequal players. The involvement of vulnerable groups, such as women, in decision-making processes is very important. They are often insufficiently represented in the working groups that draw up regional plans. Women need to have access to rights and entitlements.

4. It is important to stress that the multi-stakeholder process needs to strictly limit the participation to the direct community of interest. However, it can also give a say to people from outside the community who do not bear any cost of the resulting policies or negotiations.

**Increasing market access to farmers**

5. In the context of the globalization of the food market, farmers in developing countries need to improve access to their own local markets. Development aid programmes must be conducted accordingly. Creating a level playing field in the global marketplace will provide the necessary incentives and leeway for farmers, especially small farmers, to adopt environmentally friendly farming practices, thus avoiding their desperate acts of survival at the expense of sustainable development due to distortions in international trade.

**Partnerships**

6. *Food security*. Food security must be one of the priorities of the World Summit for Sustainable Development. In order to achieve food security, farmers need policies that focus on access to land and secure land tenure arrangements, access to water and secure water rights, access to genetic resources and access to credit at prices that they can afford.

7. *Access to natural resources*. Natural resources must be accessible to the poor, which in the farm sector means secure rights to land, water and genetic resources, for which there is a need to develop public-private partnerships. However, the public sector must remain the custodian of natural resources. Integrated management of natural resources, including river basin and watershed strategies, involving all stakeholders and users from the grass-roots level in decision-making processes, as well as protecting and recognizing the indigenous knowledge, is essential.

8. *Governance*. The mainstreaming of sustainable agriculture has yet to be attained. Many countries lack an institutional and policy framework that functions effectively to support sustainable development. The absence of basic institutional framework and policy incentives is a major impediment to the economic survival of family farms. Investment for integrated rural development plans (economic and social infrastructure, enterprise development, capacity-building for local governance) should be enhanced, in partnership with local authorities, farmers' organizations and the private and public sector.

9. *Capacity-building*. Many farmers are still not organized well enough to be able to participate as effective partners in sustainable development and its implementation, or their Governments are still not very open to such participation. More resources need to be put by national and local authorities into enhancing the capacity of farmers' organizations to contribute to self-help development and establishing stakeholder consultation processes.

10. *Technical assistance*. The implementation of sustainable development would also benefit from more effective partnerships to strengthen the knowledge base and improve the dissemination of information and knowledge through farm-to-farm technical assistance programmes, for example. Public-private partnerships could be envisaged in basic sustainable agricultural techniques.

11. *Research and development*. The public sector has the responsibility to continue to do basic research and enhance partnerships between farmers and the scientific community to work on specific issues, such as renewable energy sources, the fight against desertification and its negative effects, biotechnologies and the protection of biodiversity, and the recycling of nitrogen and phosphorous from towns and cities back to agriculture. Public funding for research therefore needs to be increased in order to find solutions to those issues. Cooperation with indigenous populations is essential in terms of using adequate technologies in accordance with their traditional knowledge.

12. *International organizations*:

(a) *Establishing a capacity-building fund.* The United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions, working with major groups, should set up in each region a capacity-building fund for major groups. That is essential to strengthen the ability of farmers and other major groups to take more responsibility for sustainable development in their sector. Arrangements for accountability and equitable distribution are a prerequisite for the development of such funds;

(b) *Providing institutional framework.* The United Nations should consolidate the multi-stakeholder dialogues by establishing an institutional structure to facilitate the building of partnerships among major groups and with Governments for strengthening the implementation of Agenda 21. That structure should ensure that national Governments work effectively and in a transparent way with the representative organizations of the "major groups", such as the farmers group, within their respective countries;

(c) *A resolution on peace and stability.* Sustainable development cannot be achieved without peace and stability. We therefore call upon the United Nations to pass a resolution to support "partnerships for peace" both within and between major groups. The resolution would state that, even in parts of the world where Governments are in conflict, civil society organizations should not be prevented from meeting and cooperating if they wish to do so.